

To: Connecticut General Assembly Housing Committee

From: Thomas Broderick, Trumbull

Re: HB6633 - AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLANS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Date: February 25 2023

To Housing Committee Chairs Sen. Marilyn Moore, Rep. Luxenberg, and Ranking and Distinguished Members,

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 6633- AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLANS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Connecticut has a housing crisis, and we need an “all-of-the-above” effort to help end it. The facts are stark:

- In January 2023, there were only 3600 homes for sale in the entire state of Connecticut (National Association of REALTORS)
- The median price for a single-family home increased from \$235,000 in 2017 to \$339,000 in 2022 (National Association of REALTORS)
- Connecticut also had the lowest rental vacancy rate in the country in the summer of 2022, with only 2.1% of rental units vacant, and in the Bridgeport metro it was only 1.4% (Census Bureau)

These numbers reflect a housing crisis along three dimensions: we have not built enough housing overall, we have not built enough varieties of housing, and we have not built housing in the towns and cities with the most demand and best access to jobs and culture.

HB 6633 seeks to address all of those issues, but I want to focus on two key elements: its fair allocation of housing in *all* municipalities, and its incentives and enforcement mechanisms. My home region of Fairfield County, with its proximity to New York City and its MetroNorth stations, should be an engine of opportunity for Connecticut and its residents, but a vocal minority of reactionaries are trying to block almost all new housing in the region. Danbury, Norwalk, and Stamford cannot house every teacher, nurse, and service worker in the state. The residents of New Canaan, Darien, Fairfield, Ridgefield, Greenwich, Westport, and others benefit from new jobs and housing growth as much as everyone, and they must play a part in solving the housing crisis that they’ve helped create. These towns sit on some of the most important land in the world, with access to New York City and its economy and culture, and they cannot continue to make new housing and new residents illegal through exclusionary, anti-market zoning.

As a Fairfield County educator and resident, I have seen the effects of the housing crisis first-hand. My wife and I love our home in Trumbull, but we would have preferred to stay closer to our jobs and continue living in

Norwalk. Unfortunately, housing prices on the I-95 corridor pushed us further north, increasing our commutes and taking us away from a city we'd come to call home. Similarly, my sister and her husband had to leave Stamford when the rent became too much and regional housing prices seemed out-of-reach. These types of stories are all too common in Connecticut—especially in the Southwest.

Importantly, homes will not be built without incentives and enforcement. Pleading with communities isn't working, and we need to make sure that this law produces results. Our current system is anti-market, anti-worker, and anti-family, and this bill's provisions are common-sense. Allowing housing by-right when it's under 20 units and near sewer and water is a no-brainer, and an appeals process for bad faith rejections is a must.

I want to emphasize that building more homes isn't a punishment for communities—it's an opportunity. Our suburbs can continue to see a nearby duplex as a threat, or they can envision the young family they'll get to know and be friends with. Housing abundance will mean more chances for families at all income levels to own, more affordable housing for those that need it, more grandparents that can downsize and age near loved ones, more of the region's young adults that can afford to settle near family, and more customers for local businesses. A housing-abundant Fairfield County will be a job-generating machine for Connecticut, and a growing, dynamic economy will lift property values — we don't have to artificially reduce the number of homes to achieve that.

The cornerstone of the American Dream is the ability to seek opportunity, but that can only happen if you have a place to call home. Restrictive zoning is restricting our choices and dreams, and we should ignore the voices pretending that the status quo is preferable. We need more homes in all of Connecticut's communities.

I am pro-housing and pro-Connecticut, and I urge this Committee and the General Assembly to support House Bill 6633- AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLANS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

A better future really is possible, but we need your leadership and vision to make it happen.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Broderick

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